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WEEKLY REVIEW

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TRINIDAD FACES A NEW POLITICAL CLIMATE

Confidence in the government has been severely shaken by the recent disorders, and cabinet changes will probably soon take place. The government also appears likely to present new legislation in an attempt to dramatize its awareness of the need for social and economic change.

The arrest last weekend of the ringleaders of the army mutiny, which erupted on 21 April, finally ended the drawn-out revolt. The rebellion, coming on the heels of weeks of unrest fomented by black power dissidents, had threatened to topple the administration of Prime Minister Williams. Since the arrests, government spokesmen have refused to divulge any of the details surrounding the mutiny, but it appeared to stem primarily from complaints about internal conditions in the regiment. Some of the officers, who are scheduled to stand trial for treason later this month, may also have been sympathetic to the black power cause.

Prime Minister Williams, who has held power since 1956, has probably now incurred political liabilities that could shake his party's long-time dominance. Williams' personal political stock, upon which the Peoples' National Movement (PNM) has been highly dependent, has undoubtedly dropped as a result of his inability to head off the black power movement or to take early decisive action against the mutineers. The resignation of one of his chief ministers, a young cabinet official regarded as a spokesman for the black nationalist wing of the PNM, has also tarnished the party's image.

Williams has tried to recoup some of his lost political ground by promising a "drastic reconstruction of government" and vowing "to support unequivocally" the claims of blacks to social justice and economic dignity. Despite the rhetoric, Williams' new programs are thus far vague. Earlier in the year, he tried to counter the demands of black power advocates by prescribing an additional 5 percent tax on corporations and individuals in high tax brackets and by immediately creating 1,600 new jobs. Even these specific efforts had little impact, in part because unemployment, estimated at 15 percent of the work force, appears to affect mainly secondary school dropouts who are unwilling to accept the common laboring jobs offered.

Williams will probably call elections late this year or early in 1971; the current parliamentary term expires next year. The prime ministers' difficulties may be complicated by a political opposition that recently has shown new signs of life. Although his foes are still splintered, Williams will have to present some practical programs in coming months if he is to stave off a serious erosion of his party's strength. ~~(SECRET)~~

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